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A N

# ESSAY

Towards making the

KNOWLEDGE

OF

RELIGION

EASY

*To the meanest Capacity.*

BEING

A short and plain Account of the *Doctrines*  
and *Rules* of CHRISTIANITY.

---

By the most Rev. Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,  
late Lord Archbishop of Tuam, in Ireland;  
*Author of An Answer to all the Excuses and Pretences*  
*for not coming to the Holy Communion.*

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The FIFTEENTH EDITION, Corrected.

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*Follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them*  
*that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart. But*  
*foolish and unlearned Questions avoid, knowing that*  
*they do gender Strifes.* 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23.

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L O N D O N,

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T O T H E

R E A D E R.

**I**F thou wantest Instruction in Religion, and art not furnished with better than what this little Book may afford thee, do not content thyself with once or twice reading of it, but read it over a great many Times; and if there be any Passage in it which seems doubtful or difficult to thee, propose it to the Minister, or to any other discreet and well instructed Christian, that he may explain it to thee; and never give off until thou art arrived to a clear Knowledge, and ready Remembrance, of all the Things that are therein contained. And when thou art thus far grounded in the Knowledge of Religion, set thyself to the diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures, and such other Books as may farther improve thee in it, and effectually bring thee up to the diligent Practice of it. *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them, John xiii. 17.*



T H E  
P R E F A C E.



OO many there are of those that profess Christianity, who understand but very little of the true Design and Purport of it; and while they are so little acquainted with that which ought to be the Rule of their Faith and Actions, it is not to be wondered, that their Opinions are absurd and foolish, and their Lives wicked.

Many good Sermons are preached, and Books published, for the Instruction of the People: But as a Lecture (however learned and rational) in any Art or Science, is not to be understood by any Man who is not first made acquainted with the general System of it; so Sermons and other excellent Discourses are but lost to abundance of Men, for want of their being before-hand carefully grounded in the Knowledge of those Things which generally all Christians do agree in.

I grant, indeed, that such Things as these, Men ought to have learned by attending on the Works of Catechising in their Younger Days: But where they have neglected this so necessary a thing in their Youth, we ought, in Charity to their Souls,



# P R E F A C E.

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use the best and easiest Method we can, to bring them to it in their Riper Years.

It has been the Judgment of some wise and learned Men, that the most effectual way, under God, to bring all Christian People to a true and profitable understanding of, and Steadiness in, their Religion, would be, to have a set of plain and short Discourses composed, equal in Number to the Sundays in one Year, and plainly, and fully containing the whole Body of Christianity; and to have one of these Discourses read every Lord's Day in each Christian Congregation; and so to continue from Year to another: and if Men could be content with wholesome Instruction, and were not so strangely fond of Novelty, of Fancy, and Variety of Expression, I think indeed that a better Way than this could not be contrived.

And this very thing brought it into my Mind, that if any reasonable Draught of the whole Christian Religion could be made in very plain Language, and brought within the Compass of one Hour's reading: such a little sort of a Book being put into the Hands of those who have not Money to buy, or Leisure to read, those that are larger; and being often read in private by single Persons, Families, and in English Schools, and being given in Parcels to Boys at the Latin School to transcribe, as their Sunday's Exercise, might be of extraordinary good Use, in order to the imprinting, and ever keeping fresh in their Minds and Memories, such orthodox and necessary Notions of the Christian Doctrine, as may always have a most

*profitable Influence both upon their Faith and Practice. In pursuance of which design, I have composed this small Work; and should be very much pleased if some judicious Person, who is a sufficient Master both of Clearness of Thought, and Plainness as well as Conciseness of Expression, would take the same thing in hand; who, I easily grant might perform it much better than I have done.*

*The Reader is to expect no more here, but a general Account of the necessary Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity: My Proposal being only to give Men of a mean Capacity a true Notion of these things, by way of a Foundation for farther Knowledge. And for the more particular handling of such Matters and Quotations of Scripture upon which they rely, I refer them to those many Sermons and other excellent Discourses which they have such frequent Opportunities both of hearing and reading. I shall only add, that it may be of good Use for a Man, as often as he intends to receive the Holy Communion, to read over this or some such other little Book, which may briefly put him in mind of all the Particulars of his Duty and so be a help to him both in the recollecting of his Sins, and renewing of his holy Resolutions.*



A N  
E S S A Y  
Towards making the  
Knowledge of Religion  
E A S Y  
To the meanest Capacity ;

*Being a short and plain Account of the*  
DOCTRINES and RULES of  
CHRISTIANITY.



ALL that God requires from any  
Man, in order to everlasting  
Happiness, is, *First*, to believe  
those things which he has made  
known ; which is called *Faith* :  
*Secondly*, to live according to  
the Rules or Laws which he has given to us ;  
which is called *Obedience* : And, *Thirdly*, when  
a Man

a Man finds that he has any way broken the Law of God, to be sorrowful for it, to confess it to God, to beg his Pardon for it, and diligently to amend it for the Time to come; which is called *Repentance*. These three Things then, namely, *Faith*, *Obedience*, and *Repentance*, do contain the whole Substance of the Duty of every Christian.

I begin with the first of these three: And in order to enlighten the Mind, and strengthen the Faith of a Christian, I shall endeavour *First*, to shew what are the chiefest of those Things which God has made known to Mankind, in order to our Belief: And *Secondly*, what Grounds and Assurance we have, upon which to believe them.

As to the former of these, the Things made known by God to be believed by us, are chiefly these:

*First*, That there is a God, who made the Heavens, the Earth, and all Things therein contained; and has disposed all Things in that most useful and beautiful Order in which they still continue. That God is not a Body, like unto us, nor subject unto any such Frailties or Imperfections as we are: But that he is a Spirit, Eternal, without beginning or ending, most holy, just and true, most gracious and merciful: That he knows all Things, can do all Things, and is present every where, without being confined to any Place. And although there neither is nor can be more than one God, yet in  
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*made easy to the meanest Capacity.* 3

the Unity of the Godhead or Divine Nature, there are three distinct Persons, of whom frequent Mention is made in the Holy Scriptures; and to each of whom both the Name and Attributes of God are often ascribed: The first of these Persons is called the *Father*; the second the *Son*, and sometimes the *Word*; and the third the *Holy Ghost*, or *Spirit*. And this, in short, is the Meaning of what we call the Doctrine of the Holy, Blessed, and Undivided Trinity: which is to be received and believed, because God has made it known to us; but ought not to be curiously pried into, because it is above our Understanding to comprehend. As long as we are here in the Body, we see such things as these but as *through a Glass* darkly; but when we shall be advanced to the perfect State of the Blessed in Heaven, then we shall see *Face to Face*, and *know even as also we are known*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

To the first of these Persons, namely to the *Father*, the Holy Scriptures do more immediately ascribe the Work of creating the World by his Almighty Power, and of governing and ordering it, and all things in it, by his good Providence.

As to the second of these Persons, who is called the *Son*, or the *Word*, we are taught to believe that he came down from Heaven, and took the Nature of Man upon him; and became Man for our Sake; like unto us in all things, only excepted: That he was conceived by the

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the Power of the Holy Spirit of God, in the Womb of a pure Virgin, and born of her, whereby he became both God and Man in one Person, was called by the Name of *Jesus* and *Christ*: And after he had lived a most pure and unspotted Life, was falsely accused by the People of the *Jews* before *Pontius Pilate* the *Roman* Governor, and was put to the shameful and painful Death of the Cross: And that it might fully appear that he had suffered even unto Death, a Spear was thrust into his Side while he was upon the Cross; and after his Body was taken down, it was laid in a Sepulchre, and continued there without Life until the third Day.

Now that we may understand how we are concerned in this Matter we must here take Notice, that the first Man and Woman, *Adam* and *Eve*, whom God created at the beginning of the World, and from whom all Mankind are descended: This first Man and Woman, I say, soon after they were created, did commit a very great Sin, and highly offended Almighty God, in eating of the Fruit of that Tree, which God had positively and strictly forbidden them to eat, under the Threatning of a very great Punishment. By this Sin of theirs, their Nature became weakened and corrupted, and very much inclined to Sin and Wickedness. And because the Nature of the Children must needs be like to that of their Parents, the Corruption of the Nature of these two Persons, who were

the common Parents of all Mankind, did communicate an universal Corruption of Nature to all their Posterity ; by which all Mankind has ever since been naturally inclined to do those Things which God has forbid, and to leave undone those things which he has commanded : which Corruption of our Nature is what we commonly call by the Name of *Original Sin*.

And besides this Original Sin, there is no Man (except *Jesus Christ*) who has lived to such an Age, as to be capable of governing and managing his own Actions ; but what has committed many actual Sins and Transgressions ; upon both which Accounts we are all by Nature rendered unfit for, and incapable of, that Eternal Happiness which God had provided for us ; and also are become exposed to the Wrath of God, and to that Eternal Punishment which his Justice has prepared for Sinners.

This is the sad and wretched Condition which all Mankind by Nature are in, ever since the Sin of our first Parents. But notwithstanding that Man had thus brought himself into this evil State, yet God in his infinite Mercy would not presently forsake, or wholly cast him off : But was pleased again to admit us all into a Capacity of being restored to his Favour, and to that eternal Happiness in the Life to come, of which our original and actual Sins had deprived us. And in order to this, he condescended to send his Son into the World to  
take

take our Nature upon him, and to become our Redeemer: his Sufferings and Death being accepted of by God, as a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World: For the sake of which, and of his most holy and unspotted Life, God has been pleased to promise Pardon and Acceptance to all those, who either before or since *Christ's* coming into the World, have or shall embrace the true Faith, heartily repent of their former Sins, and carefully lead their Lives according to the Law and Commandments of God. And this which *Jesus Christ* has thus done and obtained for us is commonly called by the Name of the *Work of our Redemption*.

Futhermore, we are taught to believe that *Jesus Christ* after his Death did descend into Hell. But since God has not thought it necessary in his Word to give us a clear and distinct Account, either what Place is meant by Hell, or for what Reason *Christ* did descend thither, there is no Reason why we should trouble ourselves with any curious Enquiry into this Matter.

And after it had sufficiently appeared, that *Jesus Christ* was truly dead; upon the third Day after his Death he rose again to Life, appeared to his Apostles and very many of his Disciples, was seen and handled by them, and eat, drank, and conversed with them for the Space of not less than forty Days (that in that time they might have sufficient Assurances of the Reality



his Resurrection) after which, in the Sight of a Multitude of them, he was openly taken up and ascended into Heaven, where he remains in the Highest Glory, which is called *sitting at the Right Hand of God*; where he continues for ever to make Intercession with God for us.

Concerning the third Person in the Holy Trinity, who is called the *Holy Ghost* or *Holy Spirit*, because he works *Holiness* in us, we are taught to believe that, soon after *Christ's* Ascension into Heaven, the Holy Ghost being sent by the Father and the Son, and coming forth from them, did in a wonderful Manner descend upon the Apostles and Disciples of *Christ*; enlightening their Minds, and opening their Understandings, that they might understand the Holy Scriptures, and know the Will of God; giving them Gifts and Abilities to teach and preach the Gospel with Truth and Power; and enabling them to speak all Sorts of Languages, that they might instruct all the several Nations and People of the World; and giving them Power to work Miracles for the better confirming those Things which they taught and preached. And although the Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel do not appear in these Days to be endowed with the same miraculous Gifts and Abilities as the Apostles were (there being other sufficient Means for the Instruction of the People, and Confirmation of the true Faith and Religion) yet are we assured, that where any Man in an honest

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and lawful way, endeavours with Sincerity and Diligence to improve his Understanding, and increase his Knowledge in the Things that relate to God and Religion, for the Good both of himself and others; the Holy Spirit of God will not be wanting to such a Man, but will assist his pious and honest Endeavours, and will more and more enlighten his Mind, that he may grow and increase in the Knowledge of those things which are necessary both to his own and others Salvation. And thus the Holy Ghost is the immediate Author and Worker of those Gifts and Graces within us which are necessary for the *Edification*; that is to say, the Instruction of all Christian People.

And whereas by Nature we are all of us inclined to Evil, and unable of ourselves to think or do any thing as we should; the Holy Spirit of God, besides the enlightening of our Minds with the Knowledge of those Things which are necessary to Salvation, does also move and work upon our Conscience, our Will, and Affections, in order to incline and bring us to and assist us in the diligent and constant Practice of those Things which God requires from us. And thus the Holy Ghost is also the Author of Holiness in us; (I mean, if we comply with his Motions, and do not resist them) which is called the Work of *Sanctification*.

The whole Congregation of People, who, by the outward preaching of the Gospel and the inward Motions of the Holy Spirit, have been called

called and brought to receive and embrace the true Faith, and baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; all these Persons, I say, together with their Children, are called by the Name of the *Church of Christ*. And as King is the Head of his Kingdom, so is *Christ* the King and Head of his Church: and the very End and Design of *Christ's* calling and gathering his Church, being the promoting of true Godliness here, in order to Salvation hereafter; for this Reason the Church is said to be *holy*, although many Persons who are ungodly, may outwardly appear and profess to be Christians, and live in the visible Communion of the Church; as one that is a Rebel in his Heart, may yet pretend to be a Subject, and live in outward Society with those who are faithful to the Government.

Furthermore, As a Kingdom or Commonwealth by its Laws and Constitutions is but one Society, although evil Men may raise Factions, make Parties, and cause Divisions within it; so our Saviour *Christ Jesus* appointed and called out one Church; in the *Communion* or Fellowship of which, all *Saints*, that is all good Christians, are for ever to be joined and united, and to partake in common the Advantages and Privileges which God has promised to that Society; altho' by the Perverseness of some, and the Mistakes of others, this same Church, which ought to be entirely one both in Faith and Charity, is divided into contrary Parties, which re-

fuse and renounce Communion with one another.

And whereas, before the coming of *Christ*, the Church of God, that is to say, the People whom God had outwardly called, and made Himself and his Will known unto them by his revealed Word; whereas this Church, I say, was then confined to one particular Place and Nation, that is to say, to the Temple of *Jerusalem*, and the Children of *Israel*; *Jesus Christ* has called all Nations and People indifferently into his Church, offering the Advantages and Privileges thereof, in as ample a Manner to the *Gentiles* as to the *Jews*; and accepting of true Faith, Repentance, Obedience, and Worship, alike in all Parts and Places of the whole World: Upon which Account the Church is called *Catholick*, that is to say, Universal.

As there is a Covenant, that is to say, a mutual Agreement or Promise made between a Husband and his Wife, a Master and his Servant, a King and his People: So in like Manner, is there a Covenant made between God, in and through *Jesus Christ* on the one part, and the Church on the other. Every Member of the Church for his Part, promises and engages to perform those Things which God requires in order to Salvation, which, at the Beginning I told you, were Faith, Obedience, and Repentance: And God, for his Part, has promised, for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*, that he will give the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit to



All those who make a good Use thereof ; that he will pardon the Sins of those who truly repent ; that altho' when we die, our Bodies do return to the Earth, out of which they were taken, as our Souls do to God that gave them, yet a Day shall come when this World shall have an End, and *Jesus Christ* shall come to judge all Mankind ; at which time, the Bodies of all Men shall be raised again, and re-united to their souls ; and whereas they who have lived wickedly, and died impenitently, shall be condemned to eternal Torments, with the Devil and his evil Spirits, who were cast out of Heaven for their Rebellion against God ; they who faithfully and sincerely perform those Things which God requires, shall be rewarded with everlasting Happiness and Joy in Heaven, in the Presence of God for evermore.

And thus we have heard what are the chief of those things which God has made known to Mankind in order to our Belief : The next thing to be considered, is, what Grounds and Assurance we have upon which we may and ought to believe them.

And here in the first Place, some of these Things are to be Believed, because we are assured of them by our own Reason and Understanding. Thus for Example, our own Reason informs us, that the World was made and framed by Almighty God, because we see so much Order, Beauty, and Usefulness in the whole and every Part of it : that God is Eter-

nal, most Wise, Good, Just, Powerful, and Perfect, because he is the first Cause of all things that good Men shall be rewarded, and wicked Men punished, because God is Good and Just, Wise and Powerful, and that these Rewards and Punishments shall be distributed in the Life which is to come, because we very often see wicked Men prosperous, and good Men much afflicted, as long as they remain in this Life. These, I say, and some such things as these are abundantly taught us even by our Reason alone, and therefore ought to be received and believed, even tho' God had not made them farther known unto us by any Revelation.

But, we have a farther ground to believe not only these and such like things as were last mentioned, but also all the rest of those things of which I have been giving an Account; and that is, because they are plainly contained in that Book which we commonly call the Holy Scripture; to which Book we ought to give credit, because the Doctrine which is contained in that Part of it which is called the *New Testament*, was confirmed not only by the Miracles and wonderful Works, but also by the Death and Sufferings of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles and many of his Disciples: And for the other Part of it, which is called the *Old Testament*, we ought to give the like Credit to that also, because *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles do so often in the *New Testament* give Testimony of the Truth of it, and assure us, that it, as well as the

*New*

*New*, was written by Holy Men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

And although the several Parts of this Holy Book were originally written in such Languages as are not now generally understood by the common People; yet since God, in his Providence, has all along stirred up the Spirits of so many Holy and Learned Men, to bestow so much Care and Pains both in the keeping and preserving, and also in the translating and explaining of this Book, and every Part of it; we may be very well assured, that if those who are unlearned, do give themselves diligently to the hearing and reading of it, in such Languages as they do understand, and also are careful to receive and follow such Instructions as godly Men, both by preaching and writing, do give them out of it; God, who is good and merciful, will undoubtedly accept of them, because that, in this Case, they do all that is within their Power to do, and more cannot with any Reason be required from them.

But if any Man should here tell me, that some of those things which the Holy Scripture proposes to be believed, are far above our Knowledge and Capacity, and therefore that it seems impossible for us to give our Assent to them, because we are not able to understand them: I answer, That if any Man would persuade me to believe a thing which were plainly contrary to Sense and Reason, and should pretend that it were revealed by God, I should  
immedi-

immediately, in such a Case, refuse to comply or yield my Assent, because I am sure that a good and gracious God will never require such monstrous and absurd Things from his Creatures: He never will impose it upon us to believe that Bitter is Sweet, or Sweet Bitter; that Darkness is Light, or Light Darkness; that what we see, and feel, and taste, to be a small Portion of Bread, is a Human Body; or, that one and the same Body can be entirely in many several and far distant Places at once. Such Things as these, I say, I am sure God will never impose upon us to believe; because he has so framed the Mind of Man, as to reject all such Absurdities and Contradictions as these, as soon as ever he hears them named. But as for Things which do not appear to be absurd, but only are dark and obscure, and not contrary to our Understanding, altho' it may be very far above it, if God has thought fit to declare some such things as these unto us, there can be no Reason why we should not give Credit to them upon his Authority. A Man who is born blind, believes that there is such a Thing as Light (altho' he knows not what it is) because all his Neighbours tell him so; and if the Holy Scripture tells me that there are three Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature, and that the Divine and Human Nature are joined together in the single Person of *Christ*, why ought I not to give my Assent to these things, altho' I do not understand the Manner of them?

And



*made Easy to the meanest Capacity.* 15

And thus have I given some Account of the first thing which God requires from us; namely, to believe what he has made known, which is called *Faith*. I proceed therefore to the second thing which he requires from us: Which is, to live according to those Rules or Laws which he has given us; which is called *Obedience*.

The Way whereby we come to know what the Laws of God are, is partly by our own Reason, and more fully by the Holy Scripture: Most of the Things which God commands are themselves so very reasonable and plain, that they who have not the Light of his Word, may yet very easily know them, even by the Guidance of their own Understanding; as will presently appear, when we come to take a View of the Particulars: And for the further directing and assisting our Reason, as also for the teaching us some Part of his Will, which otherwise of ourselves we could never come to know; he has given us a full Account of all his Laws in his revealed Word: And this is sufficient Reason to oblige us to keep them, because he who is our Creator and Redeemer, our Supreme Lord, our Master, and our Judge, requires it from us.

The chief and most fundamental of the Laws of God (and under which all the rest may be comprehended) are those which are commonly known by the Name of the Ten Commandments: But for the more easy taking a full View  
both

both of these and all the rest of God's Laws together, they are generally divided into three Sorts; the first whereof contains all those Laws which teach us our Duty to God; the second contains those Laws which teach every Man his Duty towards himself; and the third contains those Laws which teach us our Duty towards other Men: Under which Division I shall endeavour to give as short, yet plain and comprehensive an Account as I can of them.

*First* then, as for the Duty which we owe unto God, the chief Parts or Branches of it are these, namely, to acknowledge and believe all those things which he has made known (of which I have already spoken :) To own that whatever he commands or threatens is very just and fit: To hope for, and expect the Performance of all his Promises to us upon those very Terms and Conditions that he has set down; neither presuming upon God's Mercy as if he would bless us although we continue in our Sins; nor despairing of his Goodness and Favour towards us, if we repent of them and serve him faithfully: To love God above all Things because he is so excellent and perfect in himself, and so good and gracious to us; and to manifest this our Love towards him by our earnest Endeavours to do all Things which may please him, and by striving to enjoy and be with him, as much as we can here in this Life by Prayer and Meditation and also in the Life to come by preparing ourselves

elves to be for ever happy with him in Heaven: To fear God above all things, because he is most Just and Powerful, and will certainly punish us for our Sins, if we do not repent of them; for which Reason, we should be more afraid to offend him, than to disoblige all the Men in the World: To put our Trust in God in all Manner of Danger or Distress, assuring ourselves, that if we continue to serve him, faithfully, he will give us Grace and Spiritual Strength, whereby we shall be enabled to resist Temptations, and perform our Duty; and also that he will either deliver us from the Troubles and Afflictions of this World, if he sees it best for us, or else will give us Strength and Patience to bear them, and make them serviceable in the End to our eternal Happiness: To humble ourselves before God, in a due Consideration of his Greatness and Goodness, and our own Weakness and Unworthiness; submitting ourselves to his Holy Will and Pleasure; in all Things cheerfully obeying whatever he commands, and not only patiently, but thankfully bearing whatever he, in the Course of his Providence, shall think fit to lay upon us; and, the more we are afflicted, endeavouring the more to be fruitful and abound in all the Works of Virtue and Piety: To honour God inwardly by acknowledging his infinite Greatness and Goodness, and to express this Honour towards him in our outward Actions; coming to the Place of his Worship with Seriousness, and behaving our-

ourselves there with Gravity and Decency  
 paying a due Respect to his Ministers for the  
 Sake of their Function, being ready to contri-  
 bute what in us lies, to the Advancement of his  
 Glory ; employing his own Day in Works and  
 Exercises of Piety and Charity ; Reading, or  
 Hearing, or Meditating upon his Holy Word  
 and endeavouring to get the best Instruction  
 we can out of it ; giving due Attendance up-  
 on, and Obedience unto, those Ordinances  
 which he has appointed, such as Preaching  
 Catechizing, Baptism, and the Holy Commu-  
 nion ; often calling to Mind the Vow which we  
 enter into at the Time of our Baptism, whereby  
 we are admitted into the visible Society and  
 Fellowship of *Christ's* Church ; and preparing  
 ourselves constantly and diligently by Prayer  
 Meditation, Self-Examination, and Repen-  
 tance, that we may be fit to come and eat of  
 that Bread, and drink of that Cup, which *Christ*  
 has appointed as a Remembrance of his Death  
 and Sufferings for us ; and also as the Means  
 whereby we partake of, and communicate in  
 the Merits of his Passion ; for which Reason it  
 is called the *Holy Communion* ; never men-  
 tioning God's Holy Name but with Serious-  
 ness and Reverence ; abstaining from all vain  
 profane, and false Swearing, Cursing, and  
 Blaspheming ; always making a Conscience of  
 performing faithfully whatever we have bound  
 ourselves to by an Oath, and never making a  
 Jest or a By-word of any thing that relates to

God



God, or wherein Religion is concerned : And first of all, to worship God both publickly and privately ; that is to say, to praise him for his Goodness and Excellency ; to give Thanks unto him for his Blessings both Spiritual and Temporal which we have received from him, to pray unto him for all Things necessary both for our Souls and for our Bodies ; to confess our Sins unto him, and to beg the Pardon of them from him ; offering up all these our Devotions in the Name and through the Mediation of *Jesus Christ* our most blessed Saviour and Redeemer. These, I say, are the main Branches, and fundamental Parts of our Duty to God : And as we must be ever careful and diligent to perform all these Things towards him, so must we not, upon any account, render this, or any Part of this same Duty to any Thing or Person but to God alone. We must neither love, nor fear, nor hope, nor trust in, nor honour, nor worship, nor praise, nor pray to any Saint or Angel, or Image, or any Thing whatsoever, whether in Heaven or upon Earth, in the same or the like Manner as we perform these Things towards Almighty God : for God is a jealous God, and will not endure any Rival or Competitor in that Love, Honour, and Duty which we owe unto him.

I come now, in the *second* Place, to those Laws of God which concern the Duty of every Man towards himself : The chief Branches of which are these that follow ; that is to say, to

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be humble in our own Thoughts, considering what frail and infirm, what ignorant and forgetful Creatures we are; not to desire any Praise from Men, but to refer the Glory of every thing that may seem good in us, wholly and entirely to God, who is the Author of it; to be meek and calm in our Temper and Behaviour, never suffering Anger, or any other Passion, to grow strong within us, as to make us either say or do any thing that is unbecoming a *Christian*; often to consider and think upon our State and Condition, with respect both to this World and that which is to come, that so we may be always upon our guard against Temptations to Sin; to be patient and contented in all Estates and Conditions of Life, as well in Sicknes as in Health, in Adversity as in Prosperity; neither murmuring nor repining at any Evil that befalls us, nor envying those who seem to be in a better Condition than we: not coveting, or in the least desiring either Riches or Preferment, but as God sees fit, and may conduce most to his Glory; but always submitting to the secret Hand and Directions of God's Providence, which is in every Thing that comes to pass in the World; to be diligent and industrious in improving ourselves more and more in the Knowledge of Religion, and Practice of every Sort of Virtue, making the best Use we can of that Portion of Grace which we already have, that so more may be given to us; to be very chaste and modest both in our Actions, and also in our words.

Wor

Words and Thoughts, avoiding not only all filthy Lust and Uncleanneſs, but even all Manner of immodest Diſcourſe; and mortifying and ſubduing all impure Deſires; to be moderate in Eating, Sober and Temperate in Drinking, not waſting over much Time in Sleep or Idleneſs, or any Sort of Recreations, much leſs in ſuch as are unlawful; nor beſtowing much Coſt in Apparel or Furniture, or any other Thing which ſerves only to pleaſe our Fancy, or gratify our Curioſity; but always making ſuch an Uſe of thoſe Creatures which God has given us, and thoſe Liberties which he has allowed us, as may tend moſt to his Glory, the Good of others, and the Health and Welfare both of our Souls and Bodies. And this ſhall ſuffice for a brief Account of that Duty which every Man by God's Law is obliged to perform towards himſelf.

And now, in the *Third Place*, for that Duty which we owe to all other Men. By the Laws of God, we are obliged to love all Men whatever (whether they are Poor or Rich, Low or High, Friends, Strangers, or Enemies) altho' not altogether as well, yet as truly and ſincerely, without any Fraud or Diſſimulation, as we love ourſelves; and this our Love muſt never fail to be ſhewn, by our hearty Prayers for the Welfare of every Man, and our ſincere Endeavours to prevent his Hurt, and promote his Good, as far as we have Ability and Opportunity for it; always remembering and taking Care, that in our doing Good unto one

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Man,

Man, we do not offer any Injury, or neglect any Part of that Duty which we owe unto another; but doing unto every other Man, as we should judge it to be reasonable and conscionable for us to expect and desire that they should do by us, if we were in their Case and Condition. We must neither take away nor detain from any other Man, any thing which is his lawful Right; but whatsoever is fairly due to him, either by the Laws of God, or those of the Land, or by any lawful Promise or Agreement made to or with him, must freely and readily be rendered to him, without putting him to the Trouble of suing or contending for it: The Life of no Man must be taken away (except by the lawful Authority of the Magistrate, or in one's own just and necessary Defence) nor must his Body be maimed or hurt, or his good Name injured or lessened, either by raising or helping to spread any false or ill grounded Reports concerning him, or by publishing his Faults or Failings, except in Justice and Charity to others we become bound to do it: But, on the contrary, we must be ready, as we have Opportunity, to contribute what in us lies, to preserve the Life, and Health, and good Name, as well as the Goods and Estate of our Neighbour, if they appear to be in Danger, either by any Accident, or by the malicious Design of another against them: We must not tempt or allure, or by our evil Example encourage other Men to commit Sin; but as we may conveniently,



we must admonish, advise, reprove, and exhort them for their Souls good : Nor may we deceive any Man by false or equivocating speeches, or by breaking such Promises as we have made to him ; but must be true, faithful, and sincere in all our Conversation and Dealing with all Men ; Those who are Poor, or in any Distress or Affliction, we are bound, to our Power, to relieve, help, and comfort ; and tho' Malefactors may and must be punished for the publick Good, for a Terror to others, and for the saving and protecting the Lives, Estates, and good Names of honest Men, yet nothing of this Nature must be done either out of private Hatred or Resentment, or with greater Cruelty or Severity than what the Law requires, and is necessary for the true End for which such Punishments are or ought to be always designed. They who are under Errors as to Matters of Religion, are to be argued with, and persuaded for their Souls good, in the mildest and most gentle Manner ; nor should any Heat or Anger, Railing or Reviling, be made use of against the greatest Hereticks or Schismaticks ; neither ought any Man to be persecuted or punished by the Civil Power, merely for his Mistakes in Matters of Doctrine, provided that he be peaceable, and his Practice good, and that he neither attempts nor teaches any thing which tends to the disturbing of the State, or to the debauching of the Morals of the People. They who without any just

Cause are publick Enemies to the State (whether they are foreign Foes or domestick Rebels) may be resisted, and under the Commission of lawful Authority, subdued by Force of Arms. And if a private Enemy unlawfully assaults, or any way endeavours to injure any Man in his Person, Goods, or good Name, it is lawful for the Person who is thus assaulted or injured to stand up in his own Defence, as far as the Justice and Exigence of his Case requires. But when we have thus done all that is necessary, or that we are able honestly to do, for the Preservation of ourselves or the Publick; we must not proceed farther out of Hatred or Malice to do any thing merely to vex, or grieve, or hurt even the greatest and most implacable Enemies: but on the contrary, having so secured ourselves, as that they can do us no hurt, we must always be ready to do them all Manner of Good that is consistent with our own necessary Safety, and with that Duty which we owe to the rest of Mankind. Husbands must love their Wives with a most tender Affection; of which they must give all the Proof they can in all their Actions: And Wives must in like Manner love and also be obedient to their Husbands, and each of them must be strictly just and faithful to the other in all Things. Parents must honestly endeavour to provide for their Children, and to teach and breed them up in such a Manner as may be best, both for their Souls and Bodies, diligently

*made Easy to the meanest Capacity.* 25

and tenderly watching over them, to keep them from all Harm, countenancing and encouraging them in every Thing that is good; and reprov- ing, and sometimes correcting them, but with- out Bitterness or Passion, when they find them given to any Thing that is evil. Masters and Mistresses must be just and merciful to their Servants, and Servants must behave themselves not only with Faithfulness and Diligence, but also with Obedience and Respect towards their Masters and Mistresses. The Pastors and Mi- nisters of God's Church must be exemplary in their Lives, diligent and industrious in their Teaching and Preaching of wholesome and use- ful Doctrine, and administering and dispensing of all the Ordinances of God, that they may, as much as in them lies, promote the Salva- tion of the Souls that are committed to their Charge: And the People, on the other hand, must pay a Respect to their Pastors and Mini- sters, for their Work and Function's Sake; giving as constant and reverent Attendance as they can upon all Holy Offices, and carefully hearkening to, and putting in practice, all such wholesome Directions and Instructions, as they do or shall receive from them. And lastly all Magistrates and Rulers, in their several sta- tions, must govern the People that are un- der them, according to the Laws and Con- stitutions of the Land, administering Justice with Diligence and Dispatch, and without Fear, Fa- vour or Affection, of or to any Man; only al- ways

ways tempering (as much as in them lies) the Rigour and Severity of Human Laws, with that Equity, Moderation, and Mercy, that the Law of God requires, and is consistent with the Publick Good. And the People, on the other hand, must behave themselves towards their Rulers with Honour and Reverence to their Persons, and Submission and Obedience to their lawful Authority, making Conscience of performing whatever the Law of the Land requires, except it should so fall out, that something is thereby commanded, which is evidently contrary to God's Law: There being nothing else that can excuse a Subject from giving Obedience to the Laws and Constitutions of that Government under which he lives, except he can make it appear, that God himself requires the contrary from him.

And thus I have done with the second Thing which God requires from us, which is, Obedience to those Laws or Rules that he has given us. I come now to the third and last Thing that God requires from us, and that is *Repentance*; which, although it may be reckoned as a Part of our Obedience, because it is a Thing commanded by God, yet since it has an equal Relation to every one of the Divine Laws, of which I have but now been giving an Account, I thought it might not be improper to reserve it here to be spoken of in the last Place.

Now,



Now, when a Man has transgressed any of the Laws of God, and thereby made himself liable to his Wrath and eternal Damnation; the first Step that he must take, in order to Repentance and Reconciliation with him, is to be truly sorrowful for his Sins, whereby he has provoked so Good and Gracious, so Just and Powerful a God, and run himself into so great Danger. But the Truth of this Sorrow is not to be judged of by the Violence or Passionateness of it; but that Man who has such a due Sense of his Sins, as to be effectually moved thereby to forsake and amend them; He, and he only, can be said to be truly and acceptably sorrowful for them. Now this Sorrow for Sin must, in the next Place, move him to make an humble Acknowledgment and Confession of them to God: And that he may the better perform this, it is necessary that he often examine his own Conscience, and endeavour to bring his Sins to his Remembrance. And at the same time when he confesses his Sins, he must also humbly beg God's Pardon for them for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, who died for us; and must set on serious and stedfast Resolutions, that he will amend them, and lead a better Life for the Time to come; and that if he has done any wrong in Word or Deed to any other Man whatsoever, he will make Reparation and Restoration to him, to the best of his Power: And to conclude all, he must strictly keep and fulfil these Resolutions when he has made them; or else

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else all that has gone before will signify nothing. For indeed Reformation or Amendment of Life is the only Thing that completes and makes up the true Nature of Repentance.

And thus I have endeavoured to give a brief and plain Account of all that God requires as necessary to Salvation. And God of his Mercy direct us to believe and practise accordingly, and grant that in the End we may enjoy the Reward of all, even eternal Happiness, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

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